

REPORT ON
NEWARK HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
CONDITIONS IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

March 24 and 25, 1976

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Commission Position

After careful review of the information at hand, the Newark Human Rights Commission is compelled to call for an end to the "business as usual" approach to the Hispanic community by all levels of government as well as the private sector. The Hispanic population of Newark is constantly growing, and must be given the opportunity and impetus to enter into the mainstream of the city's life.

A disturbing factor that emerged through the hearing testimony and background data was the lack of accurate census information on the Hispanic community. The estimates given at the hearing ranged from the 45,771 of the 1970 census to the 95,000 currently extrapolated by La Casa de Don Pedro for the Hispanic population in the City of Newark. The census count is an integral part of the allocation of government jobs, services and resources, as well as state and federal funds. Therefore, it is critical for the Federal government to provide a complete and accurate count of all citizens. We call on the United States Census Bureau to conduct a recount of the City of Newark, using bilingual forms, enumerators and other staff.

Another extremely disturbing factor surfaced through the hearing testimony. Speakers felt that discrimination against Hispanics was not only being engaged in by the White majority community, but by the Black community as well. Professor Jose Rivera referred to this phenomenon as the "piece of the pie syndrome." Whether this discrimination is actual or perceived, the charge that "... the attitude of this Administration and citizenry of the City of Newark with respect to the Puerto Rican community . . . [is] directly analogous to the same attitude of the late '60s of the Addonizio administration to the Black community," must be answered by the present Administration.

There are certain programs, projects and agencies that have been, and continue to be, extremely responsive to the needs of the Hispanic community. This Commission commends them. Other groups require vast improvement in their relationships with the Hispanics in the city. It is hoped that this report will served as a guide for them.

The Newark Human Rights Commission recognizes its responsibility to step up its own activities regarding Hispanics in the field of Affirmative Action in city employment, participation in the work force on tax-abated construction sites, and the work forces of city vendors. Activities in the community relations area must continue to discern, and hopefully solve, the problems of Hispanics. Complaints by Hispanics of discrimination in housing, public accommodations, and employment must be investigated effectively and expediently. These are the commitments of the Newark Human Rights Commission. We will continue our efforts to maintain a dialogue between the Hispanic community and the Administration, and offer this report as evidence of our dedication to change.

B. Recommendations

The Newark Human Rights Commission has found evidence of discrimination against Hispanics in Newark in both the public and private sectors. Equal opportunity policies, whether by intent or effect, have not remedied this situation. Positive, affirmative adjustments are necessary for the effective delivery of services to, and full participation of, Hispanics in the city.

Therefore we recommend:

City Government

1. The City's Affirmative Action Plan must be firmly implemented to ensure employment of Hispanics reflective of their numbers in the population. This must apply to all federally funded as well as City funded jobs.

2. Every government department, particularly those having direct contact with the public, should employ bilingual personnel.

3. The Newark Police and Fire Departments should actively recruit and employ Hispanics.

4. Pertinent City publications and documents should be made available in both English and Spanish, similar to those already published by the Newark Public Information Office and the Newark Office of Consumer Affairs.

5. Hispanics must be given the opportunity for upward mobility within the City structure, so that they are represented in high level positions.

6. Every effort should be made to ensure that state and federal funds are equitably distributed among all segments of the population. Full public disclosure of all funds received and their disbursement by the Mayor's Policy and Development Office and the Office of Employment and Training (formerly Manpower), is essential.

7. Hispanic representation on all boards and commissions must be increased to adequately represent the interests of that community.

8. The Newark Welfare Division must increase its number of Spanish-speaking employees to adequately deal with the large number of Hispanics on its caseload.

9. The Newark Housing Authority should ensure Hispanic residency at all housing projects and Hispanics participation in the tenant government process.

10. The City of Newark should continue to conduct voter registration drives directed at Hispanics potential voters.

11. The Affirmative Action Review Council should take steps to ensure that Hispanics are participating in training on tax-abated construction sites, and are accurately reported.

12. The City of Newark should give its non-Hispanic employees the opportunity to learn Spanish and about the customs and culture of Hispanics, similar to the Boricua Awareness Program - which should be expanded - which is conducted in the Health Division.

13. The City, Board of Education and Housing Authority recreation departments should ensure facilities for, and participation of, Hispanic youngsters in all programs.

14. The City should cooperate with private agencies to ensure bilingual services including, but not limited to, legal aid.

Education

1. There must be strong measures taken to decrease the extremely high drop-out rate among Hispanics.

2. There must be strong measures taken to bring up the reading levels of Hispanic students and ensure that those just beginning school do not fall behind.

3. The Board of Education should implement its own Affirmative Action Plan to increase the number of Hispanic administrators, teachers, guidance counselors and school office staff.

4. The Board of Education should seek additional funding specifically for Hispanic remedial programs and expansion of bilingual programs.

5. Institutions of higher learning are urged to strengthen and continue Affirmative Action Plans for Hispanic students.

6. Programs and projects dedicated to needs of Hispanic students must be continued at institutions of higher learning.